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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 000235

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PKAO](#) [HA](#)  
SUBJECT: HAITI ELECTIONS: FEBRUARY 7 OR BUST

REF: PAUP 225

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Douglas M. Griffiths for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: In a January 27 elections meeting with the OAS, MINUSTAH, and donors, Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) Director General Jacques Bernard stated that the only obstacle to the February 7 election date is fear; logistical matters will not keep the people from voting. He assured the meeting that despite frustrations and interruptions, elections preparations were on track. Bernard expressed confidence that Cite Soleil's relocated voting centers would provide voters ample access. Bernard insisted that the distances to voting centers nationwide were no greater than those Haitians are accustomed walking to attend church or go to the market. Highlighting that distribution of ID cards had reached nearly 90 percent (reftel), he stated that registration receipts will not be sufficient to vote except for the rare cases where a systems error had prevented a voter from receiving his or her card. Bernard recommends that authorities permit the use of public transportation and carpools on election day. He advised that Departmental Electoral Office (BED) officials' interference with political parties' poll worker lists had delayed hiring, but that the CEP would complete hiring and training on time. Bernard thanked the Charge for ensuring that the HNP would provide his security on election day. Elections officials argued that a quick count would represent results slow to arrive from remote areas of Haiti. End summary.

VCs Moved to the Periphery of Cite Soleil

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13. (U) Bernard reported that 50,000 of approximately 55,000 registered voters in Cite Soleil have picked up their identity cards, demonstrating their intention to vote. Elections officials had relocated six Cite Soleil voting centers to the periphery of the violent slum and developed security measures to ensure the safety of the voters. Bernard reported that all of the locations have more than sufficient space to accommodate voters. The Charge remarked that none of the voting centers were located further than the distance between Cite Soleil and the card distribution center where most of the 50,000 voters had picked up their identity cards. Because they had been able to retrieve their cards, they would presumably be able to vote.

¶4. (U) Bernard discounted complaints regarding distances voters will have to travel, comparing them favorably with the distance Haitians travel regularly to reach the market and church. He doubted that Haitians were willing to make these trips but not willing to make trips of equal or lesser distance to exercise their right to vote. All they needed, Bernard said, "is encouragement from the political parties."

#### Voter Card Distribution at 86 percent

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¶5. (U) Elections officials have distributed more than 3 million or 86 percent of the 3.5 million identity cards (septel). OAS officials closed card distribution centers on January 22 and transferred cards to local electoral offices (BECs) for continued distribution through February 6. Elections officials had transferred security guards from distribution centers to the BECs along with the remaining cards, leaving equipment such as cameras and computers unguarded. Bernard lamented this lack of coordination between the OAS and the CEP. (Note: separately, MINUSTAH Chief of Elections Security and Planning Neil Warriner told poloff that he has been warning the CEP for several months of this change of assignment and yet the CEP did not make arrangements to protect the equipment. Warriner also told poloff that OAS officials had collected most of the equipment and planned to gather what was left. End note.)

¶6. (U) Bernard called the issue of voters using their receipts "difficult," explaining that the confusion lies in the legal difference between "transitional arrangements" whereby voters vote with a registration receipt and the

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"electoral decree" which states voters must vote with their identity cards. Bernard admitted there are rare instances of registered voters who could not get their identity cards because of system errors; thus poll workers will accept their registration receipts on election day. However, Bernard does not intend to issue a public decree on this matter and would instead ensure the BEDs train the poll workers to accept the registration receipts of these voters.

#### Public Transportation and Carpools on E-day

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¶7. (SBU) Bernard said that driving on Election Day was a legal decision for the government to take and that he would not issue a public announcement. He recommended that the government allow public transportation and or carpools with four or more people per vehicle. He left the security decision of the proximity of traffic to the voting centers for MINUSTAH officials to ascertain.

#### Poll Workers still need to be Identified and Trained

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¶8. (SBU) According to MINUSTAH officials, political parties were to present lists of potential poll workers to the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP). Instead, many political parties sent their lists to the BEDs which then forwarded the list to the CEP after apparently adding some names and removing others. Bernard had forwarded these provisional lists to the political parties the previous week, but had not received official responses. (Comment. In the meantime, parties continue to complain publicly about the poll worker lists. End Comment) Bernard expressed great frustration with the political parties' 'lack of discipline,' adding, "I'm tired of baby-sitting them." Disagreements among BED, BEC, and personnel and CEP, have delayed hiring and training of poll worker in many locations. Bernard and MINUSTAH officials were confident, however, that poll workers would be in place by election day. Training for poll workers lasted only two days and there are more than enough able applicants to work the polls.

## The Quick Count Dispute

¶13. (C) Meeting participants disagree sharply over the utility in conducting a quick count or parallel count. Canadian Ambassador Boucher was adamantly against the idea of a quick count. He advocated focusing all resources on obtaining official results as quickly as possible. Boucher said he feared quick count results would be misrepresented as the final results. He said that without a stronger understanding of Haiti's electorate, the international community was in no position to draw assumptions about the voting patterns. Boucher asked the meeting whether the unofficial results ought to be presented by the international community, in light of its questionable credibility among Haitians.

¶14. (C) MINUSTAH and OAS elections officials, on the contrary, supported a quick count, arguing that it would counter possible misrepresentation. They worried that as votes are tallied from Port-au-Prince, results will wrongly favor the capital's voting trends. OAS Elections Chief Santiago Murray cited a 100% accuracy rate for the 15 quick counts completed in the Caribbean, including one in Haiti.

¶16. (SBU) Comment: We strongly support the conducting of a quick count by international observers, though it is questionable if whether at this late date a useful and credible quick count could be organized. Santiago Murray is reportedly trying to enlist IFES to conduct the exercise. Both sides appear to have an inaccurate view of the uses of a quick count: results are not made public during the tallying process, but kept internally to gauge the integrity of the official tallying process, and released after official results only if the result is in question.

¶17. (SBU) Comment Continued. The failure of the government to finalize arrangements for election day traffic is a

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continued frustration. Bernard has exhausted himself fighting (and winning) many battles, and his decision to exit the field on this issue is understandable. The government needs to make a decision and publicize it immediately. We will press this issue with the Prime Minister at the earliest opportunity.  
CARNEY